# GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

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*© Photograph by Dr. E. W. Brandes*

THE CASSOWARY LOOKS LIKE AN OVERGROWN CHICKEN

This giant fowl, from whose claws arrowheads are made, was shot during a jungle chase along the Sepik River, in the northeastern part of the island of New Guinea, not far from newly-opened gold fields. The cassowary is a relative of the emu, Australia's bird of cross-word puzzle fame (See Bulletin No. 4).

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## "Shepherds of the Sun" Choose Neighbor of Mount Sinai

THE few travelers who have been able to fight their way into the dry, rocky wastes of the Sinai Peninsula, that triangular bit of Egypt wedged between Asia and Africa, have usually sought Mount Sinai, the traditional Mount of the Ten Commandments.

Soon a group of American scientists will set forth for Sinai, but their objective will be the neighboring and equally barren Mount St. Katherine. After an extensive search among arid areas in the Eastern Hemisphere the Smithsonian Institution of Washington has finally chosen Mount St. Katherine as the site for its new solar observation station. In this cloudless region modern "shepherds of the sun" will make daily observations of variations in the sun's heat. The data obtained are expected to be of value in foretelling world-wide weather conditions.

### The Wadi; Sometimes River, Sometimes Road

The region about Mount Sinai and Mount St. Katherine is described by a staff representative of the National Geographic Society, who recently traveled from Suez to Sinai by camel.

"Much of our way lay along typical desert wadies," he writes. "A wadi is a road or river, the stony bed through which, on rare occasions, torrential floods pour down. Steep slopes close in the Wadi Selaf and a man could sprint across it; yet in 1867 forty persons were drowned in a sudden flood which turned the arid expanse into a seething torrent. On the granite ridges no vegetation serves to stem the flow or to retain needed moisture.

"The wadies of Sinai to-day can differ little from those 32 centuries ago which served as highways for the Israelites after the flight from Egypt (Exodus, Chapters 14-19). The granite heart of that rocky wedge between Egypt and Arabia seems too arid, too adamantine, ever to have supported forests or even occasional trees. Yet where there is water, vine and almond, ink-black cypress and silver olive grow luxuriantly. And jutting out from bleak rock walls, wherever there is the trickle of a perennial spring, palms thrust their fronded heads on high and their insidious roots split ancient rocks in two.

"The great event of the trip is reserved for the time when, climbing up from behind the upper rim of the Wadi er-Raha, and looking down a perfect perspective between the flanking granite slopes, one sees before him the Mount of the Decalogue (Jebel Musa), one peak among many, but the noblest of all.

### A Reddish Brown Peak

"Coming upon it thus, one feels that it must be the Mount of the Law. It fits the Bible narrative as does no other peak. Reddish brown, but changing its tone under varying lights, this mighty monument is memorable for mass. It draws the eye. Alone in its impressiveness, it stands at the end of the Plain of the Tribes, sobering, awe-inspiring and sublime.

"From a distance its summit is split into three rock masses sloping slightly from the narrow crag at the right to the more rounded summit overlooking the Hill of Aaron, petty altar for the Golden Calf.

"The shelter of the Monastery of St. Katherine and its mystery beckoned us on. How potent is the lure of a long-anticipated goal! But I stopped there in



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© *Photograph by Casa Lux*

**A "FLYING FERRY" LINKS TWO BILBAO SUBURBS**

**Ocean-going steamers may pass under the lofty bridge which supports the ferry cage. As many as seventy persons can be taken across the busy Nervion River on one trip. A similar ferry-bridge is in operation in Marseille, and, until a few years ago, Duluth had one which transported both motor cars and pedestrians (See Bulletin No. 5).**

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## Ginseng, Which the United States Grows but Does Not Use

GINSENG'S popularity with the Chinese seems to defy falling markets and political disturbances, for last year more than a quarter million pounds were exported from the United States to Hong Kong. Ginseng's history is significant to-day in view of the part it once played in oriental politics between China and Manchuria.

Ginseng has been an item in United States commerce since colonial times. The first American cargo boat that cleared New York for Hong Kong, in 1784, carried ginseng. The Chinese drink ginseng tea for its tonic quality. Though we raise it and sell it, the tea has never been highly regarded in the United States, and very little is consumed here.

### Once Worth Weight in Gold

Ginseng is a plant that grows from 8 to 20 inches high, has oval-shaped leaves, bears greenish-yellow blossoms in midsummer and red berries in the fall. It thrives in mountain areas of temperate North America and Asia. The above-ground portion of the plant is not utilized; it is the thick root that enters commerce.

Long before Marco Polo passed down the Cathay coast, ginseng tea was a favorite tonic among the nobility and wealthy people of China. The poor could not afford to drink the brew. It was once worth its weight in gold. Last year's shipments averaged about $8 per pound.

Shape has much to do with ginseng price fixing. The more a root is shaped like a man, the more valuable it is on the Chinese market.

Most of the early oriental ginseng grew in the mountains of Korea and Manchuria. Every plant was owned by the ruling houses. Korean kings derived most of their revenue from ginseng roots. Manchurian rulers waxed rich.

Ginseng played an important part in oriental politics in the seventeenth century. Manchu nobles, seeing their supply of wild ginseng depleted, made laws to protect their plants against the raids of southern Chinese. Protection of ginseng resources was one of the reasons for the laws which excluded all Chinese from the domain of the Manchus. Operations of ginseng smugglers, however, persisted.

### Chinese Like Wild Ginseng

Chinese prefer the wild ginseng, although the American layman cannot detect the difference between the wild and cultivated roots. With the depletion of the oriental wild ginseng supply, the American colonist readily found a market for the roots which grew at the back doors of their villages.

Perhaps the first American ginseng collectors were trappers who discovered the plants while making their rounds. Later search for the plant led professional hunters into the trackless American forests. Thus ginseng helped open up new regions to the colonists.

Note: For recent articles describing Chinese life and customs consult the following articles in the *National Geographic Magazine:* "From the Mediterranean to the Yellow Sea by Motor," November, 1932; "Raft Life on the Hwang Ho," June, 1932; "Cosmopolitan Shanghai, Key Seaport of China," and "Macao, Land of Sweet Sadness," September, 1932; "How Half the World Works," April, 1932; "Konka Risumgongba," July, 1931; "Seeking the Mountains of Mystery," February, 1930; "The World's Greatest Overland Explorer" (Marco Polo), and "Life Among the Lamas of Choni," November, 1928.

that mighty plain and feasted my eyes on one of the most satisfying mountain views I have ever seen.

"We went up Jebel Musa (Sinai) by a road built by Abbas Pasha, who planned to have a palace on the summit. The Arabs say that when he chose the holy mountain as a health and pleasure resort, the idea of revelry on the site of the Giving of the Law so inflamed Moses that he dealt the Pasha a shaking. Anyway, he abandoned Sinai and was murdered by a Mameluke, acting in a topsy-turvy version of Scheherazade.

"Thanks to this curving road, practicable for camels, the ascent of Jebel Musa is absurdly easy. A scant half-hour of climbing on foot up irregular pilgrim steps carries one to the top, where a small chapel, a small mosque and the numbered granite blocks for a reconstruction of Justinian's church greet the eye. Beside the chapel is a tiny grotto or cleft where Moses is said to have received the Law, and below the south wall of the mosque is the cave where, tradition has it, he passed the forty nights. Mount St. Katherine is visible in the distance."

Note: For references about the Sinai Peninsula see: "East of Suez to the Mount of the Decalogue," *National Geographic Magazine*, December, 1927; and "Sunrise and Sunset from Mount Sinai," December, 1912. Students interested in solar radiation see: "Keeping House for the 'Shepherds of the Sun,'" April, 1930; "Measuring the Sun's Heat and Forecasting the Weather," January, 1928; and "Hunting an Observatory," October, 1926.

Bible students will find additional references to Sinai in the Book of Exodus, which describes the flight from Egypt, the giving of the law, the building of the Golden Calf, and the foundation of Hebrew tradition.

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**SUNSET GLOW ON THE MOUNT OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**Far off the beaten travel paths this great rocky peak (also known as Mount Sinai) rises from the arid Sinai Peninsula. It was to its summit that Moses is believed to have retired before giving his people a religious tradition that made them mighty. A fortress-monastery has been built at the foot of the pilgrims' staircase, which can be seen zigzagging up the granite slopes. The entire region is rich in religious tradition—the story of the flight of the Children of Israel, the feast of quail and manna, the altar of the Golden Calf, etc.**

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## Alexandria Plans First National Shrine to Education

A PLAN to make the old Alexandria Academy, in historic Alexandria, Virginia, America's first national shrine to education, will be inaugurated on December 14. A bronze plaque, commemorating its establishment as a free school by George Washington, will be dedicated on that date by the Washington Society of Alexandria, which was organized a month after Washington's death to carry on his charities.

Dr. William John Cooper, U. S. Commissioner of Education, representing the Federal Office of Education as well as the National Education Association, will make the principal address, and a radio hook-up over the National Broadcasting chain at 3 p. m. E.S.T., will carry the program throughout the nation. Many schools will probably want to hear about the free school George Washington established as an incentive to universal education, and where he was a guest of honor during commencement exercises in 1796.

### Faces Mount Vernon Highway

While George Washington did not go to the school in Alexandria as a student, he was intensely interested in educating the youth of the Mount Vernon district. The Alexandria Academy was a private school, there being no public free school in northern Virginia during Washington's time. In order that children whose fathers had been killed in the Revolutionary War might obtain an education, Washington notified the trustees of the Alexandria Academy in 1785 that he intended to invest £1,000 with them, "the interest only of which is to be applied for the purpose of educating orphan children, who have no other resource, or the children of such indigent parents as are unable to give it."

Through Washington's beneficence the Alexandria Academy became one of the first schools in Virginia to provide free instruction. The old, three-story, red brick building which housed the Academy still stands, facing the Mount Vernon Boulevard, and in recent years it has served as quarters for overflow classes from the public schools of Alexandria. Its most famous student was Robert E. Lee, who attended classes here in 1820.

Several different plans have been advanced for its development as a national shrine of education under the management of a board composed of patriotic and educational groups. One idea calls for the restoration of a classroom of 1785, with equipment and books of the period. Another suggestion is that the first floor might be devoted to a reception room with exhibits of old schools, school books and school equipment. It might also contain a collection of histories of education in the United States, and pictures which give impressions of American school life in various periods.

### Alexandria Was Washington's "Home Town"

As the building is in the heart of the city of Alexandria, on the new super-highway from Washington to Mount Vernon, it will be easily accessible to the thousands of Americans who each year make patriotic pilgrimages to the former home of the First President.

Historic old Alexandria has several claims to fame in addition to the venerable Academy. The name of George Washington is generally associated with Mount Vernon. But Mount Vernon is an estate, not a city. During Washington's residence at Mount Vernon his market town was Alexandria, seven miles farther up the Potomac River.

Alexandria, however, recalls more intimate associations with the First President than occasional visits to receive his mail. As a young man Washington surveyed many of the town lots of Alexandria. He also commanded its troops, joined General Braddock in the Carlyle House here at the outset of the ill-fated campaign against Fort Duquesne, was a member of its fire company and its Masonic Lodge, represented it in the House of Burgesses, attended services in beautiful Christ Church, and danced the stately minuet in the parlors of Gadsby's Tavern. In fact, Alexandria may rightly claim to be Washington's "home town."

### Might Have Been U. S. Capital

It is believed that Washington would have made the promising little town the capital of the new nation, had he not lived within a stone's throw of its borders and thought it unfair to use his influence in its behalf.

Alexandria dates from about 1730, when a settlement known as Bellhaven sprang up

© *Photograph by David J. Martin*

**TEEMING HONG KONG, AN ENGLISH OUTPOST WITH AN ORIENTAL FLAVOR**

All the pageantry of the mysterious East—waving banners with queer Chinese characters, 'rickshas, open bazaars, strange costumes, moving throngs—lives in this street scene in the British-controlled island off the south China coast. Hong Kong is the chief port of entry for ginseng root, which the United States grows in large quantities, but which Americans do not use.

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## City Brought by Air Rises in New Guinea Jungle

ONE of the most primitive and least-known regions of the world is New Guinea, the second largest island in the world. Yet in the heart of the forbidding jungles of Papua, southeastern New Guinea, a new city is rising in the gold fields of Bulolo, more than 40 miles inland from the Gulf of Huon.

In any other section of the world there would be nothing unusual about this community, but in this mountainous section of New Guinea, where navigable streams are almost unknown, all the equipment needed to work the gold fields had to be brought in by plane. In one and a half years, transport planes have carried, piece by piece, two dredges weighing several tons each; a 4,000-kilowatt hydroelectric plant; machine-shop equipment; tractors, sawmills, automobiles, and materials used in living quarters for workers. The outstanding single load was a dredger shaft, weighing over 6,000 pounds, which was lifted more than 5,500 feet above sea level.

### Cannibals Lurk in the Jungles

The black helpers, who are assisting in the conquest of this hidden wilderness by clearing soggy landing fields where grass grows two inches a day, are among the least civilized savages on the face of the earth to-day.

A few Papuans who have mingled with Dutch and English settlers and missionaries have been taught that the skulls of neighboring tribesmen are not attractive ornaments for their huts, and in the coast settlements European clothes have displaced the loin cloth and string of shell beads, but Papuans in the forests still destroy one another at sight. Many of them have never seen a white man.

Papuans are pagans. The Papuan cautiously approaches rocks on the shores of the ocean and inland streams lest a spirit that abides there stir up a storm. A spirit in the clouds destroys their children, but the strongest spirit lurks in the forest. For this reason tribesmen seldom venture out at night.

Papuan villages are built more for protection than comfort. Near the sea coast and rivers many of them are built over the water, while in the interior they occupy the hills where the tribesmen can survey the neighborhood for enemy invaders. If a village is in a valley, it is usually protected by a high stockade, or the huts are in the tree tops. Tree platforms are the tribal watchtowers.

### A Wife Traded for a Pig

Constant fighting among the Papuans has caused a shortage of men, so the women do the courting. When a tribesman is captivated by a Papuan lass he gives his prospective father-in-law a pig or dog and takes his bride to his hut. The wedding ceremony over, the bride joins the other wives in taking care of the hut and working the garden while the husband goes fighting, hunting and fishing.

Yams, sweet potatoes, birds, lizards, fish, and all kinds of insects are eaten by the natives. Turtles are a luxury to them, but the favorite tidbit is a fat grub about three inches long.

Papuans differ as to the disposal of their dead. They believe that each tribesman has two spirits. One dies with the body while the other remains with it to haunt the relatives. Sometimes a body is buried for a short time. Later it is dug up, the bones cleaned and taken to the village.

Some tribes dry the body on a platform and keep it a few years. Then it is buried and a house built over the grave for the spirit. A path is cut from

around a tobacco warehouse erected on a protected cove near the head of navigation on the Potomac. It was organized as a town in 1749, and its gridiron arrangement of streets was laid out by George Washington.

The loyalty of its early inhabitants to England is attested by the names given its streets—Royal, King, Queen, Prince, Princess, Duke, Pitt, etc. Between 1789 and 1846 Alexandria was in the District of Columbia, but since 1846 it has been the principal city of Arlington County. It has a good harbor, and, while it retains many of the fine old homes of colonial days, it is noted to-day chiefly as a busy commercial center, with large railway yards, and a number of factories making clay products, machinery and chemicals.

Note: For supplementary reading see: "Virginia, a Commonwealth That Has Come Back," *National Geographic Magazine*, April, 1929; "The Travels of George Washington," January, 1932; "Washington Through the Years," November, 1931; "Approaching Washington by Tidewater Potomac," March, 1930; and "Mount Vernon, Home of the First Farmer of America," May, 1928.

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**THE ALEXANDRIA ACADEMY AS IT IS TO-DAY**

**The City of Alexandria, eight miles down the Potomac from Washington, has many historic sites in addition to this venerable schoolhouse, which, it is planned, will become a national shrine to education. In the Carlyle House General Braddock organized the campaign against the French during the French and Indian War; Washington worshipped in Christ Church; and he served as Master of the Alexandria Lodge of Masons. Masonic organizations recently erected a towering memorial in Alexandria to commemorate Washington's activities as a Mason.**

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## Bilbao, the Pittsburgh of Northern Spain

MANY American manufacturing concerns have branch factories as well as sales offices in foreign countries. An American tire manufacturer has announced that a branch factory of his company will be opened soon in Bilbao, Spain.

The new rubber industry will not alter greatly the character of this busy seaport of northern Spain. For centuries the region around Bilbao has been one of the chief workshops of the Iberian Peninsula.

### Largest City in the Basque Country

Picture a small, round valley nestling among wondrous green hills, some of which are almost worthy of the name of mountains, with a river carefully making a letter S or two in order to enter the beautiful stronghold. That is the site of Bilbao, with its hundred thousand souls, the largest Basque city and one of the principal seaports of Spain.

The river is the Nervion, which has been canalized from the city to the Bay of Biscay, eight miles distant, so that sea-going merchant vessels come to town, passing the Ayuntamiento, the beautiful municipal building, on their way, and drop anchor within a stone's throw of the Teatro Arriga, one of the finest theaters in Spain.

The hills encircle the city so closely that the ribbons of railways seeking entry from north, east, south, and west attain their end only by plunging into smoky tunnels, or by long, snake-like curves down the hillsides.

After likening the Basque provinces to New England, one must mix his similes a bit and admit that Bilbao is the "Pittsburgh" of Spain. Along the Nervion, between the city and the sea, are some of the world's most famous iron deposits. They were known in the Middle Ages—so much so, in fact, that Elizabethan writers used the term "bilbo" for rapier or cutlass.

### Nervion River Lined with Freighters

It is largely during the last three decades, however, that vast exploitation has taken place; and now the river is lined with freighters loading ore for Newcastle, or for Rotterdam. From the latter port it is transshipped into Rhine barges and carried to Krupps and other German iron and steel makers.

But not all of this Vizcayan wealth is exported in its natural state. Basque energy has caused the erection of smelting plants along the river, where steel rails and ship plates are produced. The rails explain why these provinces lead in the matter of Spanish railways, and the steel plates why Bilbao has become one of Spain's chief shipbuilding centers.

The Nervion, crossed by several ornamental bridges, divides Bilbao into two almost equal parts, leaving on one side the old town, with its narrow streets—so narrow that wheeled traffic can be used only in two or three of them—and on the opposite side the new modern town, with its wide Gran Via and many other tree-lined avenues.

A large plaza in the old town at the foot of the principal bridge, called the Arenal, is the focus of the city's activity. It is here that the evening promenades take place, while a military band often plays popular music for the occasion.

The iron ore is loaded with modern equipment along the river, but the coal is often unloaded by hand or, perhaps to be more explicit, by head. Women almost

the hut to the nearest stream so that the spirit may bathe, and food is brought to the dead for a time so that the journey to the spirit world will not be made on an empty stomach.

Papuan women keep their husbands alive as long as possible, for, when one tribesman dies, all his wives are tabu. Wearing "widow's weeds" in New Guinea is literally true, for Papuan widows doff their short knee-length grass dresses and strings of beads for grass "gowns" that cover their bodies from their shoulders to their feet.

### "Beauty Secrets" of the Papuans

The complete everyday wardrobe of a Papuan tribe of three to four hundred men could be packed in a good sized trunk or two. The loin cloth, a string of shells or beads, and a few bone armlets are a Papuan's clothing.

In some regions the tribesmen make themselves "handsome" by piercing their noses with quills or bones, while their bodies are a mass of welts or are covered with tattooing. With these decorations and their clay-smeared hair dangling in long plaits, they are ready for a hunt,—man or animal. They are expert marksmen, armed with their barbed spears, bows and arrows and beheading clubs.

Note: See also: "Into Primeval Papua by Seaplane," *National Geographic Magazine*, September, 1929; "The Greatest Voyage in the Annals of the Sea," December, 1932; "By Seaplane to Six Continents," September, 1928.

**Bulletin No. 4, December 12, 1932.**

*© Photograph by R. K. Peck*

**A PYGMY "PENT HOUSE" 60 FEET ABOVE THE GROUND**

**To get this picture of the interior of a New Guinea native home the cameraman had to do some hard climbing. Houses are placed in trees or over the water as a protection against enemies. Against the wall at the left are bows, arrows and digging sticks. Between the two men is a sunken fireplace. At the right is a "whatnot" holding reserve arrows, headdresses, utensils and other personal belongings.**

exclusively are employed in this dainty occupation. Every day a continuous line is to be seen moving up one gangplank, with bushel basket in hand, and down another to the coal hills on shore, with a heaping basketful of coal balanced on each head.

In addition to the coal ships along Bilbao's waterfront are also to be seen freighters flying astern the red and blue banner of Norway. These carriers bring immense quantities of *bacalao,* cod preserved in great chunks like salt pork, which forms one of the chief articles of food, not only in the Basque provinces, but also in Asturias and Galicia.

Note: See also "The Land of the Basques," *National Geographic Magazine,* January, 1922; and "Pursuing Spanish Bypaths Northwest of Madrid," January, 1931.

**Bulletin No. 5, December 12, 1932.**

© *Photograph by Casa Lux*

**PAGEANTRY SURVIVES IN BUSY BILBAO**

**Although Bilbao is one of Spain's busiest commercial cities its town hall retains these picturesquely garbed heralds. Like the "beef-eaters" of the Tower of London and the striking Swiss Guards of the Vatican City, their duties to-day are largely ceremonial. Note the coat of arms of Bilbao which they wear on their breasts.**